

GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATIVE AND STAGGERED WORK SCHEDULES

PURPOSE

To provide guidance for managers in the evaluation of employee requests for alternative and staggered work schedules.

BACKGROUND

RCW 42.04.060 states that “all state elective and appointed offices shall keep their offices open for the transaction of business from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. of each business day from Monday through Friday, state legal holidays excluded.”

RCW 41.04.390 states that “due to the clear advantage to both agencies and employees, the legislature finds that flexible-time work schedules should be utilized by agencies to the maximum extent.” It further states that “each agency shall prepare a flexible-time work schedule or schedules and shall offer the schedule or schedules to employees as an option to the traditional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. working day.”

Legislation was passed in 1991 dealing with required trip reduction for major employers of 100 or more employees within the state’s eight most populated counties. RCW 70.94.547 states that “It is the policy of the state that the Department of General Administration and other state agencies shall aggressively develop substantive programs to reduce commute trips by state employees.”

RCW 70.94.551 requires that an interagency task force, of which WSDOT is a member, develop a state agency trip reduction plan. One of the recommended policies that the task force was charged to develop pertained to flexible and alternative work schedules. The state’s interagency task force (ITF) recently published and distributed the State-Government Trip Reduction Plan which contained recommendations for implementation of alternative work schedules.

According to the Commute Trip Reduction Task Force Guidelines developed by the state CTR task force, commuting alternatives which eliminate commute trips (such as four ten-hour days which count as 1.2 trips eliminated) earn bonus credits. This could be an important element in the department meeting the mandated trip reduction goals of 15 percent by January 1995, 25 percent by January 1997, and 35 percent by January 1999. A 10 percent bonus will be given if one trip is eliminated every two weeks as would be done with a schedule of eight nine-hour days plus one eight-hour day with a three day weekend.

The 1992 Review of Transportation Policy Development of the Transportation Policy Plan for Washington State contained a recommendation under the heading of Environment and

Energy that dealt with the subject of transportation demand management. The recommendation states “reduce vehicle exhaust emissions statewide as a means of attaining federal air quality standards through a balanced approach which provides and promotes alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle, promotes the use of cleaner fuels, promotes optimum maintenance of individual vehicles, and improves the operating efficiency of the transportation system.”

The International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, Local 17, agree with a contract article which states that if a written alternative work schedule request is denied, management shall provide the employee with the reason in writing.

POLICY STATEMENT

In order to reduce congestion, conserve petroleum resources, protect air quality, and reasonably meet the needs of the department employees, it is the policy of WSDOT to give maximum consideration to staggered and alternative work schedules. These schedules will be considered providing they do not prevent state offices from being open during their required hours nor have a negative impact upon public service nor impede the organization unit from accomplishing its mission in an efficient and effective manner.

STRATEGY

The strategy is for WSDOT to permit its employees the maximum flexibility to adjust their work schedules as the department meets the requirements of RCW 42.04.060 which states that “all state elective and appointive offices shall keep their offices open for the transaction of business from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. of each business day from Monday through Friday, state legal holidays excluded.”

In addition, these arrangements must not conflict with RCW 41.04.390 which states that “due to the clear advantage to both agencies and employees, the legislature finds that flexible-time work schedules should be utilized by agencies to the maximum extent.” It further states that “each agency shall prepare a flexible-time work schedule or schedules and shall offer the schedule or schedules to employees as an option to the traditional working day.” In any event, arrangements for alternative work schedules must not have a negative impact upon providing services to the public or impeding the organizational unit in accomplishing its mission.

WORK SCHEDULE RULES

1. By issuance of this policy, the secretary delegates to the assistant secretaries/district administrators authority to approve alternative work schedules or staggered work hour arrangements. All work schedules which deviate from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, will be considered to be an alternative or staggered work schedule. Further delegation may be authorized as follows:

- Headquarters: To the level of office chief or branch manager or equivalent, to be delegated at the discretion of the assistant secretary or equivalent executive.
 - Districts: To the level of maintenance superintendent/project engineer or equivalent, to be delegated at the discretion of the district administrator.
2. All schedule changes must be routed through the division/district administrative/personnel officer. Those changes involving an unlisted work schedule (See definition on page 5.) must be forwarded to the labor relations/policy management supervisor at headquarters personnel for approval. Informational copies of the final disposition memo are to be sent to the executive responsible for that employee.
 3. Approval of alternative and staggered work schedules must consider the following:
 - a. If an entire office (for example, a project engineering office) wants to deviate from the normal 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule, the assistant secretary/district administrator must approve the change as an exception to RCW 42.04.060.
 - b. A responsible person, as delegated by the approving authority, must be available during normal working hours.
 - c. There will be no reduction in customer service to the clientele nor a negative cost impact.
 - d. The job requirements of the position will be effectively and efficiently completed upon implementation of the alternative schedule.
 - e. The requested schedule must be fixed (not open to day-to-day adjustment) and include established WSDOT core hours whereby employees are expected to be at work. Core hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Employees working an alternative work schedule (four ten-hour days; eight nine-hour days and one eight-hour day per week; etc.) must be on the job during the core hours on their scheduled work days. When an operation is staffed with an evening shift or night shift, it is understood that employees on those shifts need not cover the core hours.
 - f. The requested schedule must provide for coverage during normal working hours.
 - g. The proposed work hours must comply with the requirements of the merit system rules and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

If the approving authority denies an employee's written request to work an alternative work schedule or a staggered work hour arrangement, an explanation for the denial must

be provided, in writing, to the employee and approving authority's immediate supervisor. A copy must be retained by their office or the district administrative/personnel officer.

For example, it would be appropriate to deny a request to work an alternative schedule, if the individual making the request is in a position unique to the organization, or possesses specialized skills or knowledge, and it is determined that this individual needs to be available between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

Alternative Work Schedule

Work schedules that eliminate at least one work day every two weeks by working longer hours during the remaining days, resulting in fewer commute trips by the employee.

Normal Work Hours

The standard work hours that state offices are expected to be open in order for the public to conduct business with the agency per RCW 42.04.060. These hours are normally 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, (state and legal holidays excluded) unless modified with the approval of the assistant secretary or district administrator.

Core Hours

WSDOT established hours of 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, which must be included in the work schedule. Employees working an alternative schedule (four ten-hour days, eight nine-hour days and one eight-hour day per week, etc.) must be on the job during the core hours on their scheduled work days. When an operation is staffed with an evening shift or night shift, it is understood that the employees on those shifts need not cover the core hours.

Staggered Work Schedule

A fixed work schedule whereby an employee is permitted some flexibility in choosing his or her starting and ending time outside of the agency's normal work hours. The starting and ending time plus the lunch period must be approved by the delegated supervisor. An example of a staggered work schedule would be 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with a half-hour lunch, or 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with a one hour lunch (the same as flexible-time work schedules as defined in RCW 41.04.390).

Unlisted Work Schedule

A fixed weekly work schedule for scheduled work period staff that is different from those scheduled patterns (five eight-hour days, four ten-hour days, and four nine-hour days with one four-hour day) that are pre-approved within WAC 356-15-020 (2a ii).